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ABSTRACT

A pilot project was developed to examine how changing governmental policies designed to reduce or eliminate developmental education have been affecting the organization and delivery of developmental instruction, admissions practices, and other institutional decisions and processes in the New England states. The pilot project does not evaluate New England's state policies or compare New England public institutions, but does provide clues and lessons on how developmental education policies are being implemented. The paper begins with a national profile of overarching themes related to developmental education across the United States, followed by a concentrated examination of developmental education in six New England states. Overall, there are only limited instances of written statewide policies on developmental education, Massachusetts being a clear exception with a detailed, written policy. In Massachusetts, the pilot study examined the implementation of the policy and contextual information. The Massachusetts policy requires that any new freshman requiring two or more developmental courses at a four-year institution is expected to enroll at a community college for those courses. The paper also includes state-by-state synopses of current unwritten or informal policies in the other New England states: Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The lessons learned from this examination of developmental education in one area have implications for the conduct of a national study of policies in all states. An appendix contains profiles of five institutions visited and vignettes of other campuses from which information was obtained. (Contains 30 references.) (SLD)

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Developmental Education and College Opportunity in New England

Lessons for a National Study of State and System Policy Impacts

PILOT STUDY

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Lessons for a National Study of State and System Policy Impacts

PILOT STUDY

SEPTEMBER 2002

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executive summary

Developmental education has received increased attention in the past several years, from recognition in the general media, to discussions in the higher education community, to policy changes at higher education institutions offering developmental education courses. Most of the focus has been placed on the increasing presence of developmental services at the college level, the costs associated with this growing presence, and the ways in which developmental education delivery and practices can be improved. Despite increased attention and recent analytic work, it has been difficult to assess the impact of changing governmental policies on institutional and student behavior with regard to developmental education programs and services.

The Institute for Higher Education Policy and the New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE)—both independent, non-profit entities concerned with postsecondary education policy and practice—joined together with the support of the Ford Foundation to collaborate on a pilot project that examines how changing governmental policies designed to reduce or eliminate developmental education have been affecting the organization and delivery of developmental instruction, admissions practices, and other institutional decisions and processes in the New England states. This pilot project does not evaluate New England's state policies or compare New England public institutions, but rather provides important clues and lessons on how developmental education policies are being implemented in a specific geographic region, and what questions need to be considered in a national study or project.

This paper begins with a national profile of overarching themes related to developmental education in selected states across the United States. A concentrated examination of developmental education policies in the target region of New England follows. In examining developmental education efforts in the six New England States—Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont—we found only limited instances where there are written statewide policies regarding developmental education. Massachusetts, however, is the exception. In 1996 and 1998, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education enacted policies regarding developmental education that apply to all public higher education institutions. Since it remains the only New England state with a detailed, written policy regarding developmental education, we concentrated our analysis on Massachusetts. Within Massachusetts, we looked specifically at implementation of state-mandated policy and contextual information regarding the role of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education as implementer of the policy. We also used site visits to discuss how certain public two- and four-year campuses have addressed recent modifications in developmental education policies.

In order to provide a more complete perspective of developmental education throughout the New England region, this paper also includes state-by-state synopses of current unwritten or informal state policies, institutional policies, or related activities in the other New England states—Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Developmental Education Policies in Massachusetts: Major Findings

To increase the academic quality of institutions and the competency of the student population served at public universities and colleges, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) decided in 1996 to raise admission standards incrementally at Massachusetts' state and university-level institutions. Following the increase in admissions standards, first in 1996 and then in 1998, the BHE decided to place limits on the percentage of students enrolled in developmental courses and on the number of developmental courses taken at the four-year level. The "cap" on developmental courses has been modified since 1998; the Massachusetts policy now stipulates that any new freshman requiring two or more developmental courses at a four-year institution is expected to enroll at a community college for those courses. As a result, the proportion of new freshmen enrolling in more than one remedial course at a four-year institution is expected to be zero.

Massachusetts' 1996 and 1998 modifications to its state developmental education policy had an impact on what institutions did concerning developmental education and on how they did it. Our findings were drawn largely from five selected site visits at two- and four-year institutions throughout Massachusetts. Although the colleges that were visited have different missions and serve disparate student bodies, we identified several commonalities in how developmental education is offered, reactions to the new policies relating to developmental education, as well as unique campus approaches to the changes. These include:

- **Formation of Two-Year/Four-Year Partnerships**. Some four-year institutions are partnering with two-year institutions to comply with the BHE policy, while streamlining developmental education courses, providing enhanced instruction for students, and offering smoother transfers for community college students who wish to enroll at the participating four-year institution.

- **Outsourcing**. As a form of outsourcing, some four-year institutions are establishing contractual agreements with two-year institutions through which local community colleges are paid to teach developmental courses to students enrolled in four-year institutions. Students at four-year institutions either attend developmental education classes taught by community college faculty on the partner's campus, or community college faculty teach these classes at the four-year partner institutions.

- **The "New" Role of Community Colleges**. Though developmental education is central to the mission of community colleges, state policy changes have encouraged community colleges to reexamine their developmental education roles, including related administrative and fiscal responsibilities.

- **Creation of Centralized Support Centers**. Four-year institutions are choosing not to outsource developmental education programs to nearby community colleges but elect to educate developmental education students in-house. These institutions are providing testing services, constructing academic centers, and consolidating efforts across campuses.

- **Summer Bridge Programs**. Some institutions offer summer programs to developmental students in order to allow incoming students a head start on developmental coursework before beginning the fall semester.

- **Institutional Reactions to Accuplacer**. Most of the colleges visited responded favorably to the state's mandate to uniformly use the Accuplacer exam as an assessment tool. In response to the mandate, institutions are offering assistance to incoming students in preparing for the assessment exam.

In the midst of changes in the delivery of developmental education and stringent admissions policies, Massachusetts' public institutions also are dealing with other state policies that are having an impact on the state's campuses. Although we did not anticipate encountering these external policies affecting Massachusetts' public campuses, we found that the campuses visited could not discuss developmental education programs and policy impacts without reference to other pressing issues on their campuses. These issues included: the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), the state's budget cuts and early retirement plan, more restrictive teacher certification requirements, and discussion regarding the potential introduction of a post-college, "critical thinking" exam.

It is difficult to disaggregate the effects of Massachusetts' statewide policy regarding developmental education from changes that may have occurred independent of the policy; therefore, several unanswered questions persist. Examples of some of the concerns include:

- It is unclear how credits for developmental courses can or should be counted.
- There are no discernible patterns determining which faculty teach developmental courses, how they are trained, and what is expected of them.
- Is developmental education a prerequisite for admission to all college-level courses, or just a graduation requirement?
- What is the residual impact of the increasing, state-mandated testing environment at the K-12 level on higher education and on the pool of incoming postsecondary students?

Conclusions and Implications for a National Study

The lessons learned from examining New England state policies regarding developmental education—and more specifically, Massachusetts state policy and its impact on public, Massachusetts campuses—provide several possible directions for a national study, as offered below.

- **A national study should examine both centralized and decentralized state system policy approaches to developmental education**. The policies concerning developmental education implemented in Massachusetts are different than other recent, state- and system-level policy changes. Therefore, a future national study will need to take a broad look at these different models to improve understanding of how different policy models are implemented at the institutional level. For example, a national study could group state systems regarding developmental education policy into two types of systems—centralized (significant state control) and decentralized (more institutional control)—and then analyze how these approaches relate to developmental education at the institutional level. An array of models to explore could help state policymakers better understand the options for developmental education policy for their state.

- **A national study should focus on states where a clearly defined written policy exists, and where there is preliminary or anecdotal evidence to help measure the effects of the policy.** The complex policy environment in the target state of Massachusetts made it difficult to disaggregate the effects of this specific policy from other state or institutional policy changes. Future efforts to understand the impact of these policies could benefit by a careful examination of states with fewer confounding variables.

- **A national study should focus on the states where there is a clearly defined relationship between the K-12 system and higher education with regard to developmental education.** In some states, public colleges inform local feeder high schools of their recent graduates' performance in college. Others have been working with elementary and secondary schools to prepare students for college-level work. An examination of states with strong relationships between K-12 schools and postsecondary institutions would allow policymakers to see the benefits and drawbacks (e.g., fewer students needing developmental education courses in college versus high costs of such a partnership) of an education network focusing on developing student skills, before they reach higher education. In addition, curricula alignment between K-12 schools and postsecondary institutions and its relationship to student access and success in higher education could be explored.

- **The financial implications of statewide developmental education policy changes deserve greater investigation.** It was not possible to examine how much statewide policy changes in Massachusetts may have cost instate or direct institutional expenditures. In addition, the economic effects of September 11th were beginning to have an impact on college enrollments and state funding for public institutions in Massachusetts. It is unclear from the Massachusetts study, too, if there are linkages between statewide developmental education policies and policies concerning student financial assistance and tuition.

- **A national study should examine issues concerning the curricular impacts of developmental education policies.** A national study should explore issues of curriculum such as what statewide and/or institutional approaches are more effective than others in developmental education. Examining best practices or innovative approaches in other states with regards to developmental education would inform other practitioners of better ways of educating developmental students, possibly lessening time to degree, increasing student retention and graduation rates, and improving a student's entire college experience.

- **Analysis of the direct effects of these statewide developmental education policies on admissions decisions and enrollment yields merits additional consideration.** A national study could focus on a small number of systems or institutions and collect multi-year data on admissions yields, persistence, and graduation rates.

- **A national study should examine student responses and perspectives as a consequence of changing statewide policies related to developmental education.** Students enrolled in, or placing into, developmental courses encounter a host of con-

cerns and new challenges at the college level. It would be useful to explore the impact of changing developmental education policies throughout the U.S. on student behavior, including degree attainment, persistence, and academic success. The information gained would inform state and federal policy as to best practices and innovative programs that might serve the growing developmental education student population.

△ **A national study should follow a similar methodology as in the New England pilot study, with minor modifications**. The combination of telephone conversations, e-mail correspondence, site visits, and focus groups was an effective way of measuring the impact of the changes in Massachusetts policies regarding developmental education. Allowing members of the Massachusetts higher education community—both on campuses and staff from the Board of Higher Education—to provide feedback and guidance proved to be useful tools in assessing the effects of the revised policy. However, in a future national study, comparisons between states with written policies would be useful in demonstrating the commonalities and differences in statewide approaches to developmental education policy.

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introduction

The practice of providing additional basic skills training to prepare students for college-level study is embedded in the fabric of the nation's higher education system with origins as early as the 17th century. Continuing into the 21st century, this history is one of changing interpretation and understanding of developmental education. Developmental education has received increased attention in the past several years, from recognition in the general media, to discussions in the higher education community, to policy changes at higher education institutions. Most of the focus has been placed on the growing presence of developmental services at the college level, managing the costs associated with this increasing need, and improving developmental education delivery and practices. Data is sparse on the subject, however, despite the recent focus.

The most comprehensive survey of developmental education in recent years was conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in 1996.[1] According to the NCES survey, over three-quarters (78 percent) of higher education institutions enrolling freshmen offered at least one remedial reading, writing, or mathematics course in the fall of 1995. More specifically, all public two-year institutions, 81 percent of public four-year institutions, and 63 percent of private institutions offered remedial education courses. Institutions with high minority enrollments are more likely to offer remedial courses than institutions enrolling fewer minority students (NCES 1996).

Despite the recent policy discussions surrounding developmental education, a universal standard of what "college-level" means does not exist. Standards of developmental education differ between community colleges and doctoral research granting institutions, and standards also often differ in institutions with similar missions. Alexander Astin, Director of the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California Los Angeles, points out,

> Most remedial students turn out to be simply those who have the lowest scores on some sort of normative measurement—standardized tests, school grades, and the like. But where we draw the line is completely arbitrary: lowest quarter, lowest fifth, lowest 5 percent, or what? Nobody knows. Second, the 'norms' that define a 'low' score are highly variable from one setting to another (Astin 1998: 13).

Moreover, students who enroll in developmental education are not all "underprepared" recent high school graduates. A substantial number of returning adult students are enrolled in developmental courses, in addition to those traditional-age students. For example, among entering freshmen who took a remedial class in 1992-93, 31 percent were 19 years old or younger, 46

[1] In the referenced report, NCES uses the term "remedial education" rather than developmental education. NCES defines "remedial courses" as those "courses in reading, writing, or mathematics for college students lacking those skills necessary to perform college-level work at the level required by the institution."

percent were over 22 years of age, and over one-quarter (27 percent) of entering freshmen in remedial courses were 30 years of age or older (Ignash 1997).

Despite this increased attention and sporadic analytic work, it has been difficult to assess the impact of changing governmental policies on institutional and student behavior with regard to developmental education programs and services.[2] Have these policies made a difference? How can we tell? How have institutions responded? Is there evidence that suggests students are better or worse off because of the policies? Such questions are daunting, especially at a national level, since little comprehensive analysis has yet been conducted at the state or regional level.

This study, intended to provide a bridge to an analytic national study, is designed to continue and expand upon recent research on developmental education in the U.S., focusing specifically on how state policies concerned with developmental education have affected the policies and practices of public institutions within that state. The Institute for Higher Education Policy and the New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE) at the University of Massachusetts Boston—both independent, non-profit entities concerned with postsecondary education policy and practice—have joined together with the support of the Ford Foundation to collaborate on this pilot project to examine how changing government policies designed to reduce or eliminate developmental education have been affecting the organization and delivery of developmental instruction, admissions practices, and other institutional decisions and processes in the New England states. This pilot project was developed not to evaluate New England state policy or to compare New England public institutions, but rather to provide important clues and lessons about how developmental education policies are being implemented in a specific geographic region, and what that suggests about the questions to be considered in a national study or project.

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[1] Examples of recent changes in governmental policies at the state level include reducing or eliminating the number of students taking developmental courses at the four-year level.

methodology

The project began with extensive background research of state policies on developmental education across the United States. This was followed by a more concentrated examination of developmental education policies in the target region of New England. The national research was initiated in order to assess how developmental education policies in the New England region compared to other states. Next, we consulted members of the New England higher education community through focus groups held in January 2002 and June 2002, and through telephone conversations, informal meetings, and interviews. We also visited several campuses in Massachusetts[3], representing both two-year and four-year institutions in disparate demographic locales.[4] These included:

- **Bridgewater State College** (BSC);
- **Fitchburg State College** (FSC);
- **Springfield Technical Community College** (STCC);
- **University of Massachusetts Amherst** (UMass Amherst); and
- **University of Massachusetts Lowell** (UMass Lowell)[5].

The preparation of this paper is the culmination of these efforts.

In examining developmental education efforts in the six New England States—Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont—we found only limited instances of written statewide policies regarding developmental education. Massachusetts, however, is the exception. In 1996 and 1998, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education enacted policies regarding developmental education that apply to all public higher education institutions. Since Massachusetts remains the only New England state with a detailed, written policy regarding developmental education, we concentrated our analysis on Massachusetts. Within Massachusetts, we looked specifically at the implementation of the state-mandated policy, contextual information regarding the role of the Massachusetts Board of Higher

Since Massachusetts remains the only New England state with a detailed, written policy regarding developmental education, we concentrated our analysis on Massachusetts.

[3] Massachusetts state institutions only were visited for reasons listed below.

[4] One staff member from NERCHE also visited Northern Essex Community College and spoke with faculty and administrators who are directly involved in the developmental education department. Northern Essex Community College has a long history with developmental education. Some of the findings from their discussion are included in this paper.

[5] When visiting UMass Lowell, we met with faculty and staff from Middlesex Community College, the two-year partnering institution involved in the Lowell Connections program. Information on the Lowell Connections program and Middlesex Community College's involvement is provided in more detail later in this paper. Furthermore, UMass Lowell and Middlesex Community College were considered as one site visit since their partnership was our primary interest.

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Education as implementer of the policy, and lastly, through the use of site visits, how certain public two- and four-year campuses have addressed modifications in policies concerning developmental education.

In order to provide a more complete perspective of developmental education throughout the New England region, we also have included state-by-state synopses of current unwritten or informal state policies, institutional policies, or related activities in the other New England states. Information also was gathered via email questionnaires and telephone conversations with selected campuses throughout the New England region in order to provide examples of innovative programs and practices, even in cases where little state policy guidance is offered. State-by-state synopses and innovative program vignettes can be found in the Appendix.

national policy context

Although there are variations in developmental practices among colleges and universities, commonalities exist across states and institutions. Typically, the basic philosophy of developmental education is learner-centered, with fundamental components that include: assessment and placement; curriculum design and delivery; support services; and evaluation (Institute for Higher Education Policy 1998). Through our background research and analysis, we found that the use of assessment and testing to diagnose developmental education needs is an overarching component of developmental education on most campuses. Furthermore, we have identified the following crosscutting themes and issues concerning the delivery of developmental education throughout these state policies: community college emphasis; privatization/outsourcing; and high school feedback systems.

Assessment and Testing

The assessment and placement of entering students into appropriate courses has increasingly become the foundation of developmental education at all levels. A mandatory comprehensive assessment of reading, writing, and mathematics is typically required of incoming students. The vast majority of universities in the country require the SAT or the ACT as part of their admissions process and these scores are frequently used for placement purposes. Many states—as well as individual institutions—have developed their own assessment instruments for placement purposes.

In 1987, Texas created the Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP) for all students entering the Texas public higher education system. Students must pass all three sections of the TASP before they can enroll in upper-level courses. Some institutions require local placement tests with standards that are higher than those required by the state mandated TASP—in the case of Texas the state mandated test is often combined with institution-based requirements for placement in developmental courses (THECB 1996 and 2001).

In the fall of 2001, Oregon public institutions began phasing in the Proficiency-based Admissions Standards System (PASS) as an admissions option for all Oregon University System institutions. By the fall of 2005, students applying for admission will have to present evidence of proficiency in all six specified content areas: English, math, science, visual and performing arts, second languages, and social science (McDonald 2001).

Community College Emphasis[6]

In a study by Boylan, Saxon, and Boylan (1999), the authors noted that the vast majority of states permitted developmental courses to be offered at both universities and community

[6] Much of the content on community colleges across the United States was drawn from *State Policies on Remediation at Public Colleges and Universities*. Prepared for the League for Innovation in the Community College by Hunter R. Boylan et al. of the National Center for Developmental Education. Their report is based on a telephone survey of state higher education executive officers in the United States.

colleges. However, most states consider community and technical colleges to be the primary providers of developmental courses regardless of whether developmental courses are offered at state universities. Evidence indicates that the community college emphasis is an increasing trend across the United States.

For example, at least five states—Arizona, Florida, Montana, South Carolina, and Virginia—specifically prohibit public universities from offering developmental courses. Other states have taken the approach of not specifically prohibiting universities from offering developmental education, but instead refusing to provide state funding for such courses offered at the university level. In addition to state policies relegating developmental education to community colleges, the City University of New York (CUNY) Trustees also voted to eliminate developmental education as part of an effort to curtail open admissions at CUNY institutions.

...at least five states—Arizona, Florida, Montana, South Carolina, and Virginia—specifically prohibit public universities from offering developmental courses.

Another approach has been to require arrangements to be made between universities and local community colleges to provide developmental education. For example, the University of Illinois, Springfield offers few developmental classes but has an agreement with the two local community colleges to provide developmental education for students enrolled in the university (Illinois Board of Higher Education 1997).

Privatization/Outsourcing

Some institutions choose to offer developmental education to their students by contracting or "outsourcing" developmental service needs to the private sector. In 1997, the Maryland Higher Education Commission conducted a study on the effectiveness of privatizing developmental services by examining a three-semester-long partnership between Howard Community College and Sylvan Learning Systems. The major conclusion of the study was that although the students in Sylvan's math developmental courses were pleased with the instruction they received, there was no conclusive evidence that the students in the smaller, more personalized Sylvan sections performed better than those who enrolled in a traditional developmental class (MHEC 1997). The efficacy of contracting with outside sources to offer developmental services is still largely undetermined, thus, the reason to outsource may have more to do with cost savings related to developmental education, and possibly the institution's desire to project an image of academic selectivity.

High School Feedback Systems

Another state policy approach involves high schools as potential partners in the effort to prepare their students for college. A number of states have developed feedback systems to provide information to high schools on how well students were prepared for college or university work. An example of this approach is the Maryland Student Outcome and Achievement Report (SOAR). SOAR provides information about recent high school graduates to

high schools and school district personnel in order to enhance smooth and successful transitions for college-bound students. The report contains information about student admission exemptions; developmental course work in mathematics, English, and reading; performance in the first college-level courses in English and mathematics; cumulative grade point averages; and persistence (Wallhaus 1998). SOAR now links these collegiate-level performance data with high school data supplied by Educational Testing Service and American College Testing, which includes course patterns taken, high school grade point average, test scores, and grades in core courses.

developmental education policies

in Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont[7]

No state in New England has policies related to developmental education that are as explicit as those found in Massachusetts. Nonetheless, each state has some policy or decision-making process related to developmental education. This section briefly highlights some of these state policies.

Connecticut

Connecticut poses a complex picture with respect to developmental education state policies. In 1998-99, the Board of Governors for Higher Education selected developmental education as one of its five primary concerns, and a task force was established that included representatives from all public colleges and universities and the state's independent colleges and universities. Original data has been collected from all three of the state's public university sectors, but are inconclusive (CTDHE 2001). Beyond a state policy established in 1987 stating that courses of a developmental nature should not receive college credit or be counted towards a student's total credits required for graduation, there appears to be little activity related to this issue. One exception to this policy, however, is Eastern Connecticut State University, which awards up to six credit hours of developmental education coursework towards a student's degree.

In the state university system, most campuses offer students the opportunity to enroll in a limited number of courses of a developmental nature, with the exception of Southern Connecticut State University. In an independent initiative, SCSU has developed a support program to increase developmental education opportunities for their students who require these classes and services.

Maine

Maine also does not have a current developmental education policy at the state system level, nor does it have a community college system. It has, rather, a system consisting of seven technical colleges, each of which has the autonomy to determine the best approach to developmental learning. All colleges offer various developmental courses and services along with learning centers, tutoring, and/or TRIO funded college success activities to assure that students enrolling have the academic competencies to succeed in first semester college courses. In some colleges, students have access to developmental courses online; these colleges also collaborate with various regional adult education centers to assure that

[7] Unless otherwise cited, the majority of information on developmental education policies in New England is drawn from interviews with members of the New England higher education community, websites for the state governing bodies, and interviews with representatives of those governing bodies.

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students have access to essential developmental courses that may not be available at a particular technical college. In practice, the smaller schools in the university system, such as the campuses in Augusta and Farmington, tend to provide the resources necessary to support developmental education, whereas the largest school in the system, Orono, does not focus as much in this area. By default, therefore, Augusta and Farmington may be viewed as the institutions that are utilized to meet the developmental needs of the students. Every four-year campus is also free to determine its own admissions policy and standards relative to developmental education.

New Hampshire

The legislature and trustees of the university system of New Hampshire have not considered developmental education to be an issue over the past four years. On a related matter, however, the trustees of the university system are examining ways to improve transfer ability between the two-year and four-year public institutions in the state. By improving transfer ability, the Trustees may indirectly address some of the developmental needs of the state. A possible effect of these transfer efforts might be that students with developmental needs who attend the Technical Community College system could more easily transfer to a state four-year institution.

Rhode Island

In contrast to other states, Rhode Island has concluded that no statewide policy on developmental education is necessary. In 1998, the Rhode Island Board of Higher Education requested a study to examine the level of developmental education at the three state institutions. The data indicated that the majority of developmental education was occurring at the community college level, and fewer developmental activities were taking place at the four-year university. The Board found that the distribution of developmental courses among these institutions was appropriate but suggested that these activities be reviewed every three years.

In contrast to other states, Rhode Island has concluded that no statewide policy on developmental education is necessary.

Vermont

In 1999, the Vermont State Colleges approved the Basic Academic Skills Policy, establishing a program of assessment, placement, and developmental instruction to foster student success and retention. This policy revised previous policy by specifying assessment and required developmental coursework in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Implementation of programs of the Basic Academic Skills Policy varies by the four state institutions and the community college system. Each campus is required, at least, to assess all students in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics, and to place them in the appropriate basic skills courses, developmental programs or college-level courses, and to maintain appropriate mechanisms for determining successful completion of basic skills or developmental courses.

Currently, the Community College of Vermont, which is part of the Vermont State Colleges, is examining their policy relative to the basic skills program. The concern is that a significant number of students are "draining" their financial aid awards taking developmental or basic skills courses—courses that may not be earning them credits towards a degree. The Community College of Vermont is exploring possible policy changes that would alleviate depletion of financial aid for students taking more than one basic skills course. Also under discussion is the possibility of moving assessment activities into high schools and offering developmental courses at the secondary level prior to entering higher education.

developmental education policies

in Massachusetts

In the mid-1990s, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE)[8] examined the state's developmental education policies, including assessment practices, percentage of students in developmental courses across the two- and four-year sectors, as well as the admissions standards currently in place. To increase the academic quality of institutions, reduce the number of students enrolled in developmental education, and thus increase the competency of the student population served at public universities and colleges, the BHE decided in 1996 to raise admission standards incrementally at Massachusetts' state and university-level institutions. Following the increase in admissions standards, first in 1996 and then 1998, the BHE decided to place limits on the percentage of students enrolled in developmental courses and the number of developmental courses taken at the four-year level.

Prior to the 1996 changes in policy the BHE permitted each campus to develop its own system of developmental education, and its own methods to assess, place, instruct, support, and complete post-assessment. The only prior mandate in place was the 1989 Board of Regents' implementation of a post-admissions test for each student entering into the university system, in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. If a student did not successfully pass the established standard on each test, he or she was required to enroll in a non-credit developmental course; the Board of Regents stressed that developmental courses should not receive credit towards a student's degree (Massachusetts Board of Regents 1989). However, a mid-1990s BHE survey of campuses in the university system indicated a high enrollment of students in non-credit developmental courses (Warner 2002). Thus in late 1995, in response to these and other data, the BHE approved a policy to raise admissions standards across the entire state system.

Admissions Standards

The new standards for admission included a higher minimum grade point average (GPA), which varied by four-year universities and colleges, and successful completion of 16 college preparatory courses. Effective in the fall of 2001, the GPA standard for freshman admission is 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) at the five university campuses and the nine state colleges. Currently, if an applicant is below a 3.0 GPA, a sliding scale is utilized to compare GPA with SAT or ACT scores, but no applicant with less than a 2.0 GPA is admitted to the state colleges or university campuses (BHE 2002).

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[8] The primary role of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education or BHE (formerly known as the Board of Regents for Higher Education and Higher Education Coordinating Council) is the coordination of statewide policy activities for higher education. Its mission is to ensure that Massachusetts residents have the opportunity to benefit from a higher education that enriches their lives and advances their contributions to the civic life, economic development, and social progress of the Commonwealth. To that end, the programs and services of Massachusetts higher education must meet standards of quality commensurate with the benefits it promises.

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In order to provide some flexibility in the admissions system, however, the BHE has included an admission category of "Special Admission" for those students not admissible as a "regular admit," but who demonstrate potential for academic success (i.e., special talents, strong recommendations, improving high school grades) in a four-year program. Only 10 percent of the incoming class can be enrolled under the "Special Admission" category.

Developmental Education Policies

Parallel with increased admissions standards, in 1996 the BHE adopted a policy that restricted enrollment in developmental education courses at public four-year institutions (BHE 1998a). This policy limited the percentage of the freshman class that could enroll in developmental reading, writing, and math courses or those courses "designed to prepare students for college-level work" (BHE 1998a: 11). As mandated by the policy, by 1998 no more than five percent of all first-time freshmen were to be enrolled in developmental courses. Though the percentages do not prohibit those students who need two or more developmental courses from enrolling at the four-year institutions, it is generally understood that these students should instead take their first semester at a community college.

Assessment of skill levels in reading, writing, and math is required for all incoming freshmen at all institutions.

With the passage of the 1996 policy, a Developmental Advisory Group (DAG) was established to work on the policy's implementation. This Advisory Group created an implementation guide that provided system-wide definitions and implementation practices (BHE 1998a). These include:

- **Early screening**. Designed for at-risk or marginally qualified students, screening should occur prior to acceptance by the admissions office at the college or university, and students are encouraged to take assessment tests while still in high school. Adaptive, computerized testing is utilized. Students needing two or more developmental courses should be referred to community colleges and provided information on joint admissions.
- **Early assessment, prompt referral, and appropriate placement**. Assessment of skill levels in reading, writing, and math is required for all incoming freshmen at all institutions. Institutions should use standardized assessment tools with common cut-off scores, as the BHE discourages use of the SAT or ACT exams for assessment.
- **Collaborative arrangements**. Prior to enrolling at a four-year institution, students should be referred to collaborating community colleges for developmental coursework.
- **Post-Assessments**. Students should be assessed of competencies covered in developmental coursework to ensure that they are ready for college-level work.

Since 1998, the "cap" on developmental courses has been modified based on feedback from institutions and their students. Thus, the policy now stipulates that any new freshman requiring two or more developmental courses at a four-year institution is expected to enroll at a community college for those courses. As a result, the proportion of new freshman enrolling in more than one remedial course at a four-year institution is expected to be zero.

Accuplacer

In 1999, the BHE further mandated that all incoming students in Massachusetts state colleges and community colleges take the Accuplacer Computerized Placement Test (CPT) in math and reading. Entering students with SAT-Verbal scores over 500 are exempt from reading assessment; those with scores over 600 are exempt from writing assessment.[9] For those state college and university applicants who score below 450 on the SAT-Verbal test, pre-admissions assessment of reading skills is required by the state. Students scoring below these cut-off points are mandated to take assessment exams for reading and writing, respectively; all entering students are assessed in math. The cut-off score for the Accuplacer CPT in reading is 68; for college level math, the cut-off score is 40 or 82 on the Elementary Algebra test. To test basic writing skills, the BHE recommended an impromptu writing sample that should be evaluated by faculty based on standard guidelines for evaluation. Students are provided one additional opportunity to retest, after which, those students who do not receive passing scores are required to take appropriate developmental coursework (BHE 1998).

The Broader Policy Context

In the midst of changes in the delivery of developmental education and stringent admissions policies, Massachusetts' public institutions are also dealing with other state policies that are having an impact on the state's campuses. Though we did not fully anticipate encountering these external policies affecting Massachusetts' public campuses, we found that the campuses we visited could not discuss developmental education programs and policy impacts without reference to other pressing issues on their campuses. Therefore, we decided to include other policy pressures facing the campuses we visited in order to demonstrate the complexity of issues surrounding developmental education on college campuses. These issues include: the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS); the state's budget cuts and early retirement plan; more restrictive teacher certification requirements; and discussion regarding the potential introduction of a post-college, "critical thinking" exam.

Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) was initiated in 1998 as part of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA), enacted by the state legislature in 1993. MCAS was envisioned as a means of testing students' performance in mastering the state-mandated curriculum framework, and ultimately raising the levels of academic performance. Students in the fourth, eighth, and tenth grade are tested in four core subject areas—English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Beginning in 2001, 10th graders must pass the English and Math exams in order to receive a high school diploma.[10] It is this requirement that has been most controversial, with concerns about the disparate performances among minority students, learning disabled students, students from low-income districts, and limited English-proficient students. Students' access to postsecondary education and employment opportunities could be impeded, and many opponents of the test are concerned that drop-out rates will rise, as it is uncertain what will happen to those

[9] These cutoff points are drawn from a College Board study and University of Massachusetts study of student performance.

[10] Students who fail the MCAS on their first attempt are allowed to retake the MCAS five more times prior to graduation.

who fail. At the postsecondary level, educators worry that those students who fail will be denied admission to four-year institutions and subsequently, will turn to the two-year sector for additional developmental instruction.

One example is Springfield Technical Community College, which does not admit students without a high school diploma, a diploma that can only be achieved with the successful completion of coursework and by passing the MCAS. If STCC admits students who did not pass the MCAS, institutional administrators believe that it will send the message to high schools that they are an institution for students who do not pass the MCAS. The issue for them is not *should* the community college be involved in "MCAS failures," but *how* they should be involved. Furthermore, during our second focus group, participants commented that high-stakes tests such as MCAS were implemented without a full appreciation of the impact on institutions, especially community colleges. For example, MCAS does not report students' scores until August (after acceptance decisions have been made), which complicates the admissions process for institutions that might have unknowingly accepted a student who failed to pass the MCAS.[11]

Budget Cuts

For FY 2003, the state of Massachusetts appropriated $990 million for public higher education—a three percent reduction (or almost $30 million) from FY 2002. For the most part, there were no reductions to campus programs per se; however, collective bargaining contracts (including faculty and staff contracts for all Massachusetts public institutions) experienced a cut of almost $30 million ($24.1 for UMass and $5.5 for state and community colleges). Overall, the final budget cuts were somewhat lower than had been anticipated by the institutions.

Almost every school... made reference to the impending budget cuts and early retirement plan as having possible negative effects on their programs...

Early Retirement

In late 2001, the Massachusetts Legislature passed an early retirement plan for state employees, which included faculty and staff at the University of Massachusetts, the state colleges, and community colleges. In the midst of budget cuts, these institutions will need to replace retiring faculty and staff. Essentially, the state's retirement plan increases retirement benefits and gives five years of credit to faculty and staff who are considering retirement, but under the stipulation that they leave by June 15, 2002.[12] However, the plan does not allow institutions to replace all senior faculty and staff with new lower-paid full-time faculty. Rather, institutions are allowed to hire up to 20 percent of the dollar amount of those people who leave. At the university-system level, 855 faculty and staff actually took the early retirement option, and 579 faculty and staff at the state and community colleges decided to retire early.

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[11] According to the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, a contingency plan will likely be developed if the class of 2003 includes a number of admitted students who did not pass the MCAS.

[12] Five years of credit can be a combination of either age or service.

Almost every school that we visited made reference to the impending budget cuts and early retirement plan as having possible negative effects on their programs, including in some cases even the elimination of developmental education programs and innovative practices.

Teacher Certification/Licensure Requirements

Under the new licensure requirements (effective October 2001), all teacher certification applicants (provisional, initial, and professional), must pass exams in reading, writing, and mathematics in order to teach. In addition, teacher applicants under the provisional licensure status must now take the appropriate subject matter knowledge tests for the licensure they seek. Universities and colleges are required to have 80 percent of education students pass the teacher licensure exams or they will lose their Department of Education License (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2002 and Riley, 2001).[1] These more stringent requirements may seriously affect education departments of institutions that train future teachers, especially those with larger student representation from substandard K-12 school systems who have need of developmental education.

In the case of Fitchburg State College, for example, teacher certification requirements are a concern in a situation where a community college student transfers to FSC, takes the teacher certification exams as an FSC student, and then fails the exam. The failure, then, becomes FSC's "fault" and is counted in the FSC pass rate although FSC had very little or nothing to do with the student's preparation for the exam. Although FSC wants to serve students who might need additional academic help and to graduate future teachers who are most likely to remain in the state after graduation, the 80 percent pass rate is creating problems for its education programs.

Potential "Critical Thinking" Post-College Exam

Consideration was given to requiring an exiting student assessment of college-level academic skills prior to graduation. Initially, the state of Massachusetts wanted to assess exiting students in general education objectives, including verbal and quantitative literacy and critical thinking, and possibly computer literacy. This initiative would have made Massachusetts one of only a few states (two others are Florida and Oklahoma) to adopt common assessments for both entering and exiting students in all public institutions (BHE 2002a). However, after two years of work, the Massachusetts Task Force on Exit Assessment found that one national norm critical thinking assessment was inappropriate for all colleges and universities in the Massachusetts system, and that the initiative lacked financial backing. However, the state did develop standards for critical thinking and verbal literacy, and campuses were asked to begin planning pilot assessments using those standards. With the state budget reductions, the BHE decided to not mandate these assessment standards but rather ask campuses to report their activities and results as part of the state's performance accountability system.

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[1] However, it is worth noting that the Commissioner of Education has stated that institutions that do not receive an 80 percent pass rate will not lose the right to offer programs as long as progress toward improvement can be demonstrated.

impact of statewide policies on institutional policies/procedures

in Massachusetts

While there is broad acknowledgement that the 1996 and 1998 modifications to state developmental education policy did in fact cause specific impacts and changes on what institutions do about developmental education and how they do it, the direct effects of the policy are difficult to isolate due to the number of state-level changes occurring throughout the Massachusetts higher education system.

With this understanding, this section therefore draws tentative conclusions about the possible effects of the revised developmental education policies on what Massachusetts public colleges and universities do in relation to developmental education. The findings discussed here are drawn largely from five selected site visits at two- and four-year institutions throughout Massachusetts.[14] Site visits were conducted by a two-person team, with one representative from NERCHE and one from the Institute for Higher Education Policy, during the month of April 2002. Organizational teams spoke with administrators, faculty, and staff who work directly with developmental education students in the various programs and centers on their respective campuses. In addition, the teams examined the institutional policies and procedures related to developmental education on each of the selected campuses. The schools were chosen based on their locales, student bodies served, and various developmental education programs and activities. Detailed information on the policies and practices at these institutions is contained in the Appendix.

General Policies and Practices at Massachusetts Site Visit Institutions

Although the colleges visited have different missions and serve disparate student bodies, we have identified commonalities 1) in how developmental education is offered on these Massachusetts campuses, 2) in the reactions to the new policies relating to developmental education, and 3) in campus approaches to these changes. When looking at the five institutions visited as a whole[15], the reactions to the policies can be combined under six categories:

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[14] One representative from NERCHE met with representatives from Northern Essex Community College, but this visit is not included in the five site visits. However, the findings from those conversations are included in the following section.

[15] It should be noted, however, that UMass Amherst is an exception to our overall findings from the other visited campuses. From our discussion with representatives of the UMass Amherst campus, the BHE policy was implemented at a time when UMass Amherst was already becoming more selective, and overall enrollment in their developmental classes was declining. Five years ago, UMass Amherst developed a new admissions model that de-emphasized the SAT. The sense is that the BHE policy on developmental education caps had no effect on their campus because of the more sophisticated admissions system and the fact that the school had no problems with compliance prior to the implementation of the policy. As a result, little information is included here for the UMass Amherst site visit.

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- **Formation of Two-Year/Four-Year Partnerships.** Some four-year institutions are partnering with two-year institutions to comply with the BHE policy, while streamlining developmental education courses, providing enhanced instruction for students, and offering smoother transfers for community college students who wish to enroll at the participating four-year institution.
- **Outsourcing.** As a form of outsourcing, some four-year institutions are establishing contractual agreements with two-year institutions through which these local community colleges are paid to teach developmental courses to enrolled students in four-year institutions. Students at four-year institutions either attend developmental education classes taught by community college faculty on the partner's campus, or community college faculty may teach these classes at the four-year partner institutions.
- **The "New" Role of Community Colleges.** Though developmental education is central to the mission of community colleges, state policy changes have encouraged community colleges to reexamine their developmental education roles, including the related administrative and fiscal responsibilities.
- **Creation of Centralized Support Centers.** Four-year institutions are choosing not to outsource developmental education programs to nearby community colleges but elect to educate developmental education students inhouse. These institutions are providing testing services, constructing academic centers, and consolidating efforts across campuses.
- **Summer Bridge Programs.** Some institutions offer summer programs to developmental students in order to allow incoming students a head start on developmental coursework before beginning the fall semester.
- **Institutional Reactions to Accuplacer.** Most of the colleges visited responded favorably to the state's mandate to uniformly use the Accuplacer exam as an assessment tool. In response to the mandate, institutions are offering assistance to incoming students in preparing for the assessment exam.

Formation of Two-Year/Four-Year Partnerships

One of the most important changes since the initial 1996 policy is the zero percent "cap" on the proportion of new freshman enrolling in two or more developmental education courses at a four-year institution. The delivery of developmental education courses has shifted substantially to community colleges. As a solution to the zero percent restriction, some four-year institutions have begun to establish institutional partnerships and collaborations with two-year institutions in order to serve students who test into two or more developmental-level courses.[16] These partnerships range from carefully constructed agreements between two schools that are often in close proximity geographi-

The delivery of developmental education courses has shifted substantially to community colleges.

[16] At times, it is unclear whether these partnerships between two- and four-year institutions are in direct response to the changes in state policy, since some institutions appear to have formed these partnerships based on other institutional interests.

cally to more loosely defined alliances among or between institutions. Many of these partnerships focus on achieving economies of scale across institutions—reducing overlap or duplication of effort—while at the same time improving the prospects of students transferring from two-year programs to four-year institutions.

One example of such a partnership is the evolving relationship between University of Massachusetts Lowell and Middlesex Community College through their "Lowell Connections" program, a pilot project that began in 1998 and was funded through a competitive grant process initiated by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. The program was initially supported by the BHE with a $200,000 grant, but has since become an institutionalized program. Now in its fourth year of existence, it allows students who apply to UMass Lowell and are not admitted based on UMass Lowell's admissions requirements, to enroll in the "Lowell Connections" program on a first-come, first-served basis. This program allows students to take necessary developmental and college-prep courses at Middlesex Community College for one year. Students who require additional developmental assistance remain at Middlesex for more than a year, while others are there for only one semester. Students must accumulate at least 12 transfer credits and maintain a 2.5 GPA before transferring to UMass Lowell. Students are not required to retake the SATs or the Accuplacer entrance exam upon transfer to UMass Lowell. Currently, more than 200 students are enrolled in the program.

Prior to the creation of "Lowell Connections," UMass Lowell's developmental education student population was placed under a program known as University College. Though useful at one time for the institution, senior leaders at UMass Lowell concluded that its services for developmental students needed to be retailored. Nearby Middlesex Community College saw that the research university did not have the capacity to fully serve these students, and that both institutions were duplicating efforts concerning developmental education, and that both institutions believed that transfer between the community college and the four-year institution was complicated at times. With the new state policies on the horizon coupled with their encouragement from their campus presidents, the two institutions were compelled to jointly consider how to deal with the new developmental education policies, identify "turf issues," and develop a sense of trust in order to work collaboratively. The collaboration also provided an opportunity for both institutions to return to their original missions to better serve the needs of their respective student bodies.

College officials characterize several features of the program as key to its success. One such feature is that students admitted to the "Lowell Connections" program are able to reside in the residence halls at UMass Lowell while they take their classes at Middlesex, as well as participate in on-campus activities. Also, all "Lowell Connections" students take one class entitled "Values and Creative Thinking" on the UMass Lowell campus while they are completing their coursework at Middlesex; this class is taught by a UMass Lowell faculty member, who has volunteered to teach the class. Another key feature is that the parents of Lowell Connections students must meet with their student's advisor at the beginning of the program. Parental participation is an important part of the program; around 80 percent of parents attend the first advising session.

Leaders at both institutions applaud the success indicators for the program. For instance, the drop-out rate for students in Lowell Connections is approximately five percent—well below the expected dropout rate for such a program. Many attribute the success of the program to the individualized and intense academic advising at Middlesex that has been coordinated with the transfer policies and requirements for UMass Lowell. The coordinator of the connections program at Middlesex and the director of transfer admissions at UMass Lowell meet regularly to ensure a smooth collaboration.

Another example of a successful partnership effort can be found at Fitchburg State College in its Institute program with Mount Wachusett Community College. These two institutions—located about 13 miles apart—created the Institute program after the 1996 BHE policy was put into effect. The immediate impact of the new BHE policy on Fitchburg State College was significant, with more than a 25 percent drop in new student enrollment. The college's budget, in turn, was particularly hard-hit by dorm vacancies. Fitchburg State developed a partnership with Mount Wachusett where students who are not admitted to FSC are offered the program, if they meet the following criteria:

- High school GPA of 1.9-2.4
- All or almost all academic units completed; and
- Combined SAT score of 900

One important feature of the program is the way it is marketed to prospective students. Students chosen for the Institute program are mailed a letter, which says, in part, that because of new admissions requirements "we are not able to offer you admission to Fitchburg State College at this time. Instead, we invite you to participate in the Fitchburg State College/Mount Wachusett Community College Institute. Students are invited to join the Institute based on demonstrated potential, high school GPA, standardized testing results, and courses completed during the high school years."

Under the program, students have dual enrollment, live in FSC dorms, and take classes at Mount Wachusett's campus, but are not matriculated at FSC. All academic and support services on each campus are available to Institute students. Further, students are guaranteed that for-credit courses taken at Mount Wachusett will transfer to FSC. The majority of students in the program complete their coursework at Mount Wachusett in one or two semesters and then transfer to FSC. In order to matriculate at FSC, students must either earn 12-23 transferable credits and a minimum 2.5 college GPA, or earn 34 or more transferable credits and a minimum 2.0 college GPA.

Outsourcing

To comply with the state policies, some institutions are outsourcing developmental courses and programs to other institutions. This type of outsourcing does not involve the use of for-profit education providers, such as Sylvan Learning Systems, which offer fee-for-service packages to colleges to meet their developmental/remedial needs. Though found in other states nationwide, we found little evidence of this sort of outsourcing in Massachu-

setts. Rather, we found several instances where four-year institutions are directly paying community colleges to offer developmental coursework—usually at the four-year college campus soliciting these services.

Fitchburg State College, in addition to its Institute program, has an outsourcing arrangement with Mount Wachusett Community College for students enrolled at FSC who need developmental education services, but who are not in the Institute program. FSC hires Mount Wachusett faculty to teach developmental courses at FSC. Fitchburg State College students enrolled in these courses are not counted in the percentage of students taking two or more developmental education courses. As a result, the FSC totals are much lower than they were previously, and the institution achieves the allowable percentage of developmental education students.

At UMass Lowell, students not enrolled in the "Lowell Connections" program who fall below the BHE cutoff score in reading take a Middlesex reading course—at UMass Lowell.

The "New" Role of Community Colleges

Developmental education, according to community college officials, has always been an essential part of their mission. Both the financial and administrative impact of the altered statewide policy, however, was apparent in the community college sector, which recognized early that the BHE policy was likely to have a profound effect on the operation and delivery of developmental education programs. Thus, in the fall of 1997, the community colleges—which previously had only limited experience in collaboration—established a series of working groups and committees to comprehensively review developmental education policies and practices at all 15 of the state's community colleges. The resulting information and recommendations have had an important impact on what community colleges do in developmental education, and how they do it.[17]

While we found that community colleges visited for this project have developed innovative ways (i.e., partnerships with four-year institutions, summer programs) to address the changing developmental education needs of students, it is unclear whether those institutional responses can be attributed to the new statewide policy. At Springfield Technical Community College, for example, the general consensus is that the policy had no real impact on STCC. An assumed post-policy impact on community colleges was an increase in enrollment. STCC's enrollment was already at its maximum, however, and the college attributes its enrollment growth as more likely a result of the "tech boom." The institution did acknowledge that in general, community colleges increasingly are given additional responsibilities by the state, with little financial backing to support growing enrollments and emerging educational needs.

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[17] For further information on this process and its results, see *Access and Quality: Improving the Performance of Massachusetts Community College Developmental Education Programs*, Commonwealth of Massachusetts Community College Developmental Education Committee, July 1998.

Creation of Centralized Support Centers at Four-Year Schools

Another perceived effect of the statewide policies on four-year institutional procedures and policies has been the creation of centralized campus centers that concentrate on academic skills enhancement.[18] This is a decidedly different strategy than the partnerships between two-year and four-year schools because it relies on a consolidation of efforts focused on developmental education at a single institution. Bridgewater State College, for example, has decided against a partnership arrangement or the outsourcing of developmental education, concluding instead that it is within the means of the college to effectively meet the developmental needs of students. The College has established a comprehensive Academic Achievement Center (AAC), developed partly in response to the BHE policy, to provide a "full service" approach to meeting student development needs. Bridgewater State's institutional philosophy is that all students are somewhere on a continuum of achievement. Some need support to perform at the college level and some who are already successful students benefit from the support needed to achieve at an even higher level.

The AAC conducts an array of functions, from analyzing placement tests of first-year students, to tracking student progress via a computerized system, to offering a special freshman seminar course for students who place below college level in reading or writing. The seminar has a curriculum that is the same as the standard required freshman seminar but a member of the AAC team-teaches with the faculty member and students are required to meet weekly with a tutor. The computerized tracking system ensures that students register for each step of the orientation and placement testing process without bypassing any steps or prerequisites.

According to the college, about 50 percent of the students who use the AAC at any given time are students of color, and approximately 10 percent of the students using the AAC are not native speakers of English. In the last three years, the number of freshmen on academic probation in the second semester has dropped by half, and college officials attribute this success to the efforts of the AAC.

The community colleges that we visited utilized a highly centralized approach to meeting the needs of developmental education students. For example, Northern Essex Community College has a long history of providing extensive support through its Department of Developmental Studies; its department and the staff members view developmental education as part of a life-long process. This Department is located within the Academic Affairs division, and the faculty and staff in this department perform all of the assessment, peer tutoring, counseling, teaching, and administration for this population. The Department houses separate centers for reading, writing, math, and ESL, which supports over 900 students in Math; 500 in ESL; 500 in reading; and 150 in writing in a typical semester. Through this centralized system, learning communities have been formed to help integrate developmental education into the curriculum and the campus.

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[18] We visited four four-year institutions, which all handled developmental education in different ways based on the needs of their campuses.

Summer Bridge Programs

On a national level, one of the most widely used methods for addressing student development needs is through summer bridge programs.[19] In Massachusetts, where several programs sprang up in the post-BHE policy timeframe, these types of programs allow students to get a head start on honing their academic skills before the beginning of the fall semester, thereby decreasing both their time to degree and time spent in non-credit/developmental education courses. At Fitchburg State, for instance, there is a five-week summer residential program for students who are very close to being admitted—usually students in need of one more course or those whose SAT and GPA score falls just below the cut-off for regular admission. The program is free for the student, with tuition, room, and board paid by the college. If the student passes the program, he or she is fully admitted to FSC and begins in the fall semester.

Similarly, UMass Lowell offers students with developmental needs the option of participating in the Summer SPRINT Program, which offers preparatory courses in reading, writing, and math. The majority of the students who choose to participate in SPRINT live in close proximity to the campus.

Institutional Reactions to Accuplacer

The campuses that we visited appeared to be in favor of the state-mandated Accuplacer exams and offer test-taking strategies to assist students in taking these placement exams. For example, Bridgewater State encourages its incoming students to test in the spring so that if they need to retest, they can prepare over the summer and retest in the fall. During the summer, Bridgewater State provides multiple means for review to students who need to retest, including summer workshops, review packets, and even sessions a few hours before the placement test. In addition, many of the schools that we visited encouraged their incoming students to review sample Accuplacer questions prior to the exam and informed their students of the assessment requirements; in fact, many of the schools (e.g., STCC) post possible questions on their website for students to review.

Despite the positive response expressed at the campuses we visited, during the focus group discussions some participants noted that the "one size fits all" approach of Accuplacer and the state policies do not take into account differences in student populations and their testing needs. Furthermore, some institutions noted the cost burden associated with purchasing Accuplacer. Participants at the second focus group also questioned whether institutions liked the actual Accuplacer tests as a placement tool or rather that the test sets a universal standard for assessment and placement practices.

Policy Implementation Concerns in Massachusetts

The statewide policy implemented by the BHE in Massachusetts has had an uncertain impact on institutional policies and procedures, even as institutions have modified their course requirements, advising programs, and other developmental efforts in important ways

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[19] See Julie Yearsley Hungar and Janet Lieberman, *The Road to Equality: Report on Transfer for the Ford Foundation*, 2001 for discussion of summer bridge programs that encourage transfer between two- and four-year institutions.

during this timeframe. The task of disaggregating the effects of Massachusetts' statewide policy and isolating the changes that may have occurred independent of the policy (because of other statewide policies, or because of unrelated institutional decisions) is complicated. Several unanswered questions persist. Examples of some of the concerns about implementation of the Massachusetts policy include:

- **It is unclear how credits for developmental courses can or should be counted.** Institutions appear to have varying policies with respect to the awarding of credit for developmental courses, with some allowing no credit, some permitting credit that can count toward graduation but not degree requirements, and others offering variants on the above. Developmental education courses, however, generally tend to be non-credit bearing.

- **There are no discernible patterns determining which faculty teach developmental courses, how they are trained, or what is expected of them.** Policies appear to vary widely by institution, with some schools saying that their best and most experienced faculty teach such courses, while others suggest that it is not a desirable assignment for some faculty. In addition, some participants in the second focus groups commented on a lack of expertise in their developmental education teachers as well as a lack of skill in teaching different cultures, lifestyles, and learning styles.

- **English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL or ESL) courses are sometimes counted as developmental, and sometimes not.** Again, there does not appear to be wide agreement among institutions with respect to whether ESOL/ESL "counts" as developmental in nature, or whether such courses can be offered for credit. On some campuses, ESOL/ESL students—an increasing population—remain in developmental courses for longer periods of time in comparison to their native-English speaking counterparts, and may deplete their financial aid packages on non-credit bearing developmental courses.

- **Is developmental education a prerequisite for admission to all college-level courses, or just a graduation requirement?** The policy here is vague. In some instances, students are fulfilling their developmental requirements prior to enrollment in any college-level courses. In other cases, successful completion of the course or courses is merely a requirement for eventual degree attainment.

- **Resources to implement the statewide policy have been minimal.** Several institutions reported that the costs of the changes required by the statewide policy were significant, but only one limited state program was ever developed to directly support institutional compliance with the policy. In addition, institutions and participants commented on the need for consistent, clear reporting requirements from the state.

- **What is the residual impact of the increasing, state-mandated testing environment at the K-12 level on higher education and the pool of incoming postsecondary students?** With the introduction of MCAS in 1998 as the state's indicator of who is eligible to receive a high school diploma based on passing scores in English and math, educators and administrators at the postsecondary level are concerned about the pool of students who are able to access a four-year degree, as

well as the increased strain on community colleges who will in turn educate those students denied access to a four-year institution. Participants commented that the new college placement test, SAT-1, which is slated for implementation in 2005 and includes a writing sample, could further affect admissions, placements, and developmental education at the college level.

conclusions and implications for a national study

This working paper offers important lessons about how a national study of state and system policies concerning developmental education might be conducted. The New England pilot study was intended neither as an evaluation of state policies in New England, nor as a comparison of one institution against another. Instead, it explores how state policies regarding developmental education affected institutions in one state, and what lessons might be learned from such an examination. Conclusions and implications are offered below.

A national study should examine both centralized and decentralized state system policy approaches to developmental education. The policies concerning developmental education implemented in Massachusetts are different than other recent state- and system-level policy changes. Therefore, a future national study will need to take a broad look at these different models to improve understanding of how different policy models are implemented at the institutional level. For example, a national study could group state systems regarding developmental education policy into two types of systems—centralized (significant state control) and decentralized (more institutional control)—and then analyze how these approaches relate to developmental education at the institutional level. Answers should be sought to these basic questions. Which appears to be more effective and why? Why does a particular approach work better for this state than in another state? Are there benefits to having high levels of state control (centralized) versus a more decentralized approach? An array of models to explore could help policymakers better understand the options for a developmental education policy for their state.

A national study should focus on states where a clearly defined written policy exists, and where there is preliminary or anecdotal evidence to help measure the effects of the policy. The complex policy environment in the target state of Massachusetts made it difficult to disaggregate the effects of this specific policy from other state or institutional policy changes. Though examination of other state policies might produce similar findings, future efforts to understand the impact of these policies could benefit from a careful examination of states with fewer confounding variables.

A national study should focus on the states where a clearly defined written policy exists...

A national study should focus on the states where there is a clearly defined relationship between the K-12 system and higher education with regard to developmental education. In some states, public colleges inform local feeder high schools of their recent graduates' performance in college. Others have been working with elementary and secondary schools to prepare students for college-level work. An examination of states with strong relationships between K-12 schools and postsecondary institutions would allow policymakers

to see the benefits and drawbacks (e.g., fewer students needing developmental education courses in college versus high costs of such a partnership) of an education network focusing on developing student skills early, before they reach higher education. In addition, curricula alignment and impacts between K-12 schools and postsecondary institutions and its relationship to student access and success in higher education could be explored.

The financial implications of statewide developmental education policy changes deserve greater investigation. Because of the complex policy context in Massachusetts, it was not possible to examine how much the statewide policy changes may have cost in direct state or institutional expenditures. In addition, it was difficult to understand what, if any, linkages there may be between the statewide developmental education policies and policies concerning student financial assistance and tuitions. This should be explored in future national research.

A national study should examine issues concerning the curricular impacts of developmental education policies. A national study should explore issues of curriculum—such as what statewide and/or institutional approaches are more effective than others in developmental education. Examining best practices or innovative approaches in other states with regards to developmental education would inform other practitioners of better ways of educating developmental students, possibly lessening a student's time to degree, increasing retention and graduation rates, and improving a student's entire college experience.

Analysis of the direct effects of these statewide developmental education policies on admissions decisions and enrollment yields merits additional consideration. A national study could focus on a small number of systems or institutions and collect multi-year data on admissions yields, persistence, and graduation rates.

A national study should examine student responses and perspectives as a consequence of changing statewide policies related to developmental education. Students enrolled in, or placing into, developmental courses encounter a host of concerns and new challenges at the college level. Therefore, it would be useful to explore the impact of changing developmental education policies throughout the U.S. on student behavior, including degree attainment, persistence, and academic success. The information gained would inform state and federal policy as to best practices and innovative programs that might serve the growing developmental education student population.

A national study should follow a similar methodology as in the New England pilot study, with minor modifications. The combination of telephone conversations, e-mail correspondence, site visits, and focus groups was an effective way of measuring the impact of the changes in Massachusetts' policies regarding developmental education. Allowing members of the Massachusetts higher education community—both on campuses and staff from the Board of Higher Education—to provide feedback and guidance proved to be useful in assessing the effects of the revised policy. However, in a future national study, comparisons between states with written policies would be useful in demonstrating the commonalities and differences in statewide approaches to developmental education policy.

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appendix

This section includes profiles (i.e., demographic information, detailed information on developmental education activities, findings from student interviews) of the five institutions that were visited: **Bridgewater State College**; **Fitchburg State College**; **Springfield Technical Community College**; **University of Massachusetts Amherst**; and **University of Massachusetts Lowell**.[20]

Also, state-by-state synopses of current unwritten or informal developmental education policies, institutional policies, or related activities in the other New England states are offered in the form of vignettes. This information was gathered via email questionnaires and telephone conversations with selected campuses in Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. These include: **Hillyer College** (Connecticut), **University of Maine Augusta**, **Keene State College** (New Hampshire), **Community College of Rhode Island**, and **Vermont Technical College**.

The site visit profiles and vignettes showcase various practices and innovative programs that were revealed during our research and visits to these highlighted institutions.

[20] Details of the conversation with Northern Essex Community College are not provided.

Institutional Profiles of Public Massachusetts Institutions Selected for Site Visits

Bridgewater State College

Location: Bridgewater, Massachusetts
Established: 1840
Highest Degree Offered: Master's Degree *(Has a joint Doctoral program with the University of Massachusetts Lowell)*
Enrollment: 8,839 part-time and full-time *(includes 7,080 undergraduates)*

Bridgewater State College, located in southeastern Massachusetts, offers 28 undergraduate majors and graduate degrees in 12 fields. BSC historically has focused on the preparation of teachers, and though the institution continues to adhere to that mission, it offers a range of baccalaureate programs in the arts and sciences, and in education and allied studies. Through its new School of Management and Aviation Science, BSC offers the only four-year aviation program at a public institution in New England.

BSC's philosophy concerning developmental education is that all students are somewhere on a continuum of achievement. Some students need support to perform at the college level and some already successful students benefit from support to achieve at an even higher level. When the BHE policies were issued, BSC decided against outsourcing developmental education or funneling students to community college for pre-college level coursework. According to BSC, the BHE policies have introduced new levels of accountability that the institution has found useful in leveraging changes to better serve students. Though partly in response to the BHE policies, the Academic Achievement Center established in 1998 provided BSC with a central location for academic advising, tutoring, and assistance in coping with disabilities of any kind.[21] AAC administrators and staff analyze the placement test results of incoming first-year students, track the actual course placements, and monitor BSC's compliance with the state policies. The AAC recently implemented a computerized tracking system to ensure that students register for each step of the orientation and placement testing process without bypassing any steps or prerequisites. BSC through its Academic Achievement Center, encourages students to take placement tests in the spring so that they have the summer for review and can retest in the fall. BSC emphasizes the importance of reviewing for the math placement test and provides multiple means for students to review.

For those students who place below college level in reading or writing, BSC offers a course entitled "Fortified Freshman Seminar." The course curriculum is the same as the standard required freshman seminar; however, a staff member of the AAC team-teaches with the faculty member and students are required to meet with a tutor once a week. Within the math department, students testing into pre-college level courses are taught by visiting lecturers; however, there are motions to cut back on the use of visiting lecturers. The math placement depends on whether students intend to pursue a degree with significant math requirements. Students not pursuing math-related majors can move into certain designated college-level courses with lower Accuplacer scores.

The students that we spoke to were involved with the AAC in various ways; some were taking only a single pre-college level course in either math or reading, while others were taking two pre-college courses. Overall, students felt that they received a great deal of personal attention. For example, several students mentioned that they preferred to do their homework in the AAC because they accomplished more than in other places, and most students agreed that the orientation program and placement tests were helpful in providing them appropriate support.

Source: Interviews with Staff and Faculty and Related Written Materials from Site Visit to BSC on April 1, 2002.

[21] The Honors Center was moved to be a part of the AAC to emphasize that the AAC's mission is to support all students in achieving their full potential.

Institutional Profiles of Public Massachusetts Institutions Selected for Site Visits

Fitchburg State College

Location: Fitchburg, Massachusetts
Established: 1894
Highest Degree Offered: Master's Degree
Enrollment: 6,500 *(Full-time and Part-time, includes 1,100 graduate students)*

Fitchburg State College is a public college located in a city of 40,000 in the North Central part of Massachusetts, close to the New Hampshire border. FSC offers more than 50 undergraduate degrees in 16 academic departments, 32 Master's Degree programs, six Certificate of Advanced Degree programs, and 11 Graduate Certificate programs, and accommodates both traditional and non-traditional students through its interdisciplinary competitive programs in the liberal arts, sciences, and the professions. In 2000, the college granted 589 Baccalaureate degrees and 307 Master's degrees. Last year, FSC awarded financial aid to about three-quarters of its incoming student population. Recognizing its achievements, in 1997, the BHE designated the institution as a site to host a Leadership Academy Honors Program. FSC's Leadership Academy provides leadership opportunities and enriched academic experiences, as well as merit-based awards, to 40 incoming students (both in-state and out-of-state) each year, based on their academic achievement and civic participation.

When the BHE policies were initiated in the late 1990s, Fitchburg State College responded to the new environment in three ways: establishing a summer bridge and transition year program; outsourcing developmental education courses to Mount Wachusett Community College; and the formation of the "Institute" program with its partnering nearby two-year institution, Mount Wachusett Community College.

The Summer Bridge and Transition Year Program is a five-week summer residential program for students who are very close to being admitted into the institution, but who are in need of one additional course, or are just barely below the SAT or GPA cut-off score for admission. Each summer, approximately 50 students take advantage of this free program (the college pays the student's tuition and room and board). During the summer, placement testing is administered and developmental courses are offered in addition to liberal arts courses if "readiness" courses are not required. First-year seminars provide students with orientation to the college, support services, and instruction in learning strategies and study skills. If the student passes the program, he or she is admitted to FSC for the fall semester. One student described how the structured program, with its mandatory study time, helped her learn to balance her time and to decide when and how to ask for help; she credits the program as a "stepping stone" to her success at FSC.

For those students who are clearly testing into developmental courses at FSC (unlike those students involved in the summer bridge program), FSC has outsourced its developmental needs by hiring Mount Wachusett faculty to come to FSC to teach the developmental courses in math, English, and reading. Since Mount Wachusett faculty are teaching the courses, the FSC students do not count as FSC developmental students, allowing the institution to be in compliance with the BHE policies. These developmental courses are worth institutional credits, but cannot be used to satisfy graduation requirements. However, the course grade is included in the GPA of the students, and the credit does count towards full-time student status for federal financial aid purposes.

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Institutional Profiles of Public Massachusetts Institutions Selected for Site Visits

Fitchburg State College (continued)

Each department/course—math, reading, and English—has its own course set-up. For example, math courses are set up on a two-tiered system based on Accuplacer results. If the student's score is under 50, the courses are taught by Mount Wachusett faculty, which meets twice a week. Those students testing into basic algebra (scoring between 70 and 82) are taught by FSC faculty and meet three times a week. Classes are capped at 20 students, and typically have between six and nine sections per semester, with four faculty members teaching them. One faculty member teaches no more than two developmental courses per semester.

However, unlike the math courses, the reading courses currently are not tiered; students can take either a one credit reading improvement course at FSC based solely on self-referred students or those recommended by faculty. The other students who place in developmental courses on the Accuplacer now take courses at Mount Wachusett.[23] Faculty and staff would like to see reading courses designed based on Accuplacer reading scores since some students needing help may be slipping through the cracks.

One evident impact of the BHE policy on Fitchburg's campus was a 25 percent drop in new student enrollment. The changes in admission policies resulted in vacancies in dorms, which led to budgetary concerns. In fact, the raising of admissions standards was a larger issue for FSC than the "cap" on developmental education students. Thus, in order to curtail these financial and enrollment losses, FSC developed a collaboration with Mount Wachusett—known as the Institute program—that permitted students who were rejected from FSC (based on the new admission standards), yet still met certain criteria, to take their developmental or readiness courses at Mount Wachusett while still residing on FSC's campus. In the Institute program, participating students have dual enrollment but are not matriculated students at FSC. All academic support services on each campus are available to Institute students. Students enroll in the Liberal Arts Transfer program, which guarantees that courses take at Mount Wachusett will transfer to FSC. Upon completion of the necessary coursework and criteria, students can transfer to FSC to complete their four-year degree. In Fall 2001, approximately 900 students were rejected from FSC, with 549 of the denied students offered the Institute option. Of these students, 156 expressed interest in the Institute program, and 107 actually registered. Essentially, this program allows FSC to fill its vacant dorm space while creating an even larger transfer applicant pool.

Sources: Interviews with Staff and Faculty and Related Written Materials from Site Visit to FSC on April 3, 2002; Fitchburg State College: First Year Student Outlook; Fitchburg State College: College Catalog

[23] Prior to the new BHE policies, 15 to 20 students would enroll in the one-credit FSC reading improvement course; today, about six students are enrolled.

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Institutional Profiles of Public Massachusetts Institutions Selected for Site Visits

Springfield Technical Community College

Location: Springfield, Massachusetts
Established: 1967
Highest Degree Offered: Associate's Degree
Enrollment: Approximately 7,000 *(day and evening)*

Springfield Technical Community College is located on 35 acres of the Springfield Armory History Site, in southern Massachusetts. STCC is recognized as the most comprehensive community college in the state, offering 40 associate degree programs and 25 certificate programs, including humanities, technologies, health sciences, business, and engineering. It is nationally known as a pace-setter in technology education and instructional innovation, contributing to the economic development in Pioneer Valley due to its connections with the business community and partnerships with nearby high schools and four-year institutions. Currently, it is the only institution in the country selected by the National Science Foundation as a Center for Excellence in Advanced Technological Education.

Despite the state policies concerning developmental education, the general consensus at STCC is that the policy had no real impact on their campus since the institution historically has always been a provider of developmental education. In fact, in the mid-1970s, STCC became the first community college to require placement testing in Massachusetts. It also was the first Massachusetts community college to offer an ESL program. Currently, the institution offers developmental courses in math, science, English, and reading; developmental courses at STCC fall under "General Studies." Students in these courses are offered a range of support—tutoring, progress evaluation, and counseling. Due to concerns regarding assessing student outcomes, STCC has a Developmental Education Task Force, which created objectives for each course and developed a five-year plan that focuses on developmental course policies and assessment (the task force is now in year two). The Task Force has three components: 1) establishment of a reading policy; 2) post-testing; and 3) program review.

Developmental students aspiring to an associate's degree generally are enrolled from three to four years. Students placing into developmental reading courses (about one-third) must take the reading course they place into to graduate. STCC would eventually like to see the reading courses linked to programs so that the content students read complements their interests. About 40-45 percent of students take developmental writing as a pre-requisite to English composition; an essay test is given at the end of the course resembling the placement test for college level. Approximately half of the English department faculty are designated developmental instructors; STCC has been turning more and more to "specialized faculty" for developmental education courses as opposed to regular departmental faculty. The Developmental English department also offers a special course for ESL students. Developmental math courses are offered as either self-paced or lecture format. Two-thirds of the courses are "lab-oriented" (i.e., computers can be used after the lecture and students can take "mini quizzes" that record student scores on a database). In addition, three bilingual math courses are offered. Each faculty member in the department teaches two or three developmental courses, out of the five classes they teach.

Sources: Interviews with Staff and Faculty and Related Written Materials from Site Visit to STCC on April 16, 2002; STCC's Catalog 2000-2002 and Admissions Brochure.

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Institutional Profiles of Public Massachusetts Institutions Selected for Site Visits

University of Massachusetts Lowell[23]

Location: Lowell, Massachusetts
Established: 1894 *(1991 as part of the University of Massachusetts system)*
Highest Degree Offered: Doctorate
Enrollment: 15,246 *(2000-01) Includes day and continuing education students—undergraduates and graduate.*

The University of Massachusetts Lowell is located in northeast Massachusetts, approximately 25 miles northwest of Boston. In addition to the overall mission of the Massachusetts university system, UMass Lowell focuses specifically on regional industrial development through research and education in partnership with local industries. UMass Lowell offers 5 programs at the associate's degree level, 36 at the bachelor's level, 29 at the master's level, and 12 at the doctorate level. In Fall 2001, around 78 percent of the undergraduate student population were Massachusetts residents, with 70 percent of all undergraduates receiving some kind of financial assistance.[23]

With regard to student assessment and developmental education, the university has had a comprehensive assessment and placement program since the early 1980s. Prior to the state-level policies concerning developmental education and the partnership with Middlesex Community College, UMass Lowell's developmental education students were placed under a program known as University College. Though useful at one time for the institution, UMass Lowell concluded that services for developmental students needed to be retailored. New state policies on the horizon coupled with encouragement from campus presidents prompted UMass Lowell and the nearby Middlesex Community College to jointly consider how to deal with the new developmental education policies and better serve developmental education students while adhering to their respective institutional missions. The outcome was the creation of the partnership between UMass Lowell and Middlesex Community College known as the "Lowell Connections" program. This program began as pilot project in 1998 and was funded through a competitive process initiated by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. The program—now in its fourth year—has since become an institutionalized program. Essentially, "Lowell Connections" allows students who are rejected, based on UMass Lowell's admissions requirements, to enroll in the program. Students are admitted to the "Lowell Connections" program on a first-come, first-served basis. This program allows rejected UMass Lowell students to take the necessary developmental and college-prep courses at Middlesex Community College for one year. Students who require more developmental assistance remain at Middlesex for more than a year, while others remain at Middlesex for only one semester. Students must accumulate at least 12 transfer credits and maintain a 2.5 GPA before transferring to UMass Lowell. Students admitted to the Lowell Connections program are able to reside in the residence halls at UMass Lowell while they take their classes at Middlesex, as well as participate in on-campus activities. Some students also enroll in the Summer SPRINT program, which is an eight-week summer program concentrating on developmental reading, writing, and math courses. This option allows students testing into developmental courses to get a "head start" on fulfilling course requirements and lessening their time enrolled in non-credit bearing courses.

UMass Lowell also provides academic and students support services to its students—and incoming transfer students from community colleges—in multiple ways. For example, UMass Lowell's Center for Learning and Academic Support Services, which was established in 1986, offers all students academic support services. A collaborative advising model was developed between Middlesex Community Col-

Institutional Profiles of Public Massachusetts Institutions Selected for Site Visits

lege, North Shore Community College, Northern Essex Community College, and the UMass Lowell that facilitates an agreement to collaborate on advising transfer students not enrolled in joint admission programs. The "Goaler Program" provides a summer program in August to students whose SAT scores or class rank is below what is considered a "regular accept," who are first generation students and whose role model is not necessarily in the home. This summer program provides study skill training and acclimates participants to the campus and college environment. Another program, "Advance to Go," brings in high-risk students for an intensive week of training and support during the summer before they begin their fall semester. In addition, these students receive a "buddy"—an administrator or faculty member who monitors the student's progress throughout the students four years.

Sources: Interviews with Staff and Faculty and Related Written Materials from Site Visit to UMass Lowell on April 17, 2002; UMass Lowell's Factbook 2000-01; UMass Lowell Undergraduate Viewbook and Admissions Application 2002-2003; UMass Lowell's Undergraduate Catalog 2002.

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[23] When visiting the campus of UMass Lowell, we spoke with faculty and staff from Middlesex Community College, the two-year partnering institution involved in the Lowell Connections program. No profile information is included on Middlesex Community College since we did not physically visit their campus.

[24] The percentage of Massachusetts residents includes only day students.

Institutional Profiles of Public Massachusetts Institutions Selected for Site Visits

University of Massachusetts Amherst

Location: Amherst, Massachusetts
Established: 1863
Highest Degree Offered: Doctorate
Enrollment: 18,268 undergraduate and 5,311 graduate *(Fall 2001)*

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is the flagship campus of the Massachusetts public university system. The university is located on 1,450 acres in the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts. UMass Amherst offers associate's degrees in 6 areas, bachelor's degrees in 87, master's degrees in 68, and doctoral degrees in 50. In Academic Years 2000-01, the university granted 5,402 degrees total (includes bachelor's, master's, doctorate, and other). In FY 2001, UMass Amherst awarded financial aid to more than two-thirds of its degree-seeking undergraduates. The majority of the undergraduate population is traditional age (18-21 years old).

Though UMass Amherst provides advising, counseling, and assessment services for its student body and a few non-credit bearing courses, our discussion with representatives of the UMass Amherst campus revealed, that BHE policy on developmental education caps had no effect on UMass Amherst's campus because of 1) its more sophisticated admissions system, and 2) because the school had no problems with high enrollments in developmental courses prior to the implementation of the policy. Five years ago, UMass Amherst developed a new admissions model that de-emphasized the SAT. As a result, UMass Amherst is an exception to our findings from the other campuses visited. The BHE policy was implemented at a time when UMass Amherst was already becoming more selective and overall enrollment in developmental classes was shrinking. In the early 1990s, UMass Amherst observed a decline in preparedness in their incoming freshman class; however, placement test results from Fall 1995 to Fall 2001 demonstrate that the number of entering freshman needing additional help in mathematics has reversed and is now lower than in previous years.

Sources: Site Visit to UMass Amherst on April 16, 2002.

Vignettes of Selected Public Institutions in New England

Hillyer College

Location: West Hartford, Connecticut
Established: 1968
Highest Degree Offered: Associate's Degree
Enrollment: 610

Hillyer College is a two-year liberal arts institution located on the campus of the University of Hartford. Unique in both proximity and linkages to a four year institution, Hillyer is one of nine colleges that comprise the University of Hartford system. Hillyer provides intensive preparation for its students to enter four-year degree programs, both at the University of Hartford and at other nearby institutions. Almost all (90 percent) of Hillyer's students successfully transfer to a four-year institution. Hillyer faces a diverse set of student needs as it serves students with combined SAT scores from between 600 to over 1000, and thus seeks to sustain academic programs that both challenge and equip students with requisite skills for success in a four-year institution and beyond. Both the faculty and administration's largest task lies in creating and maintaining a curriculum that caters to the needs of all students while also meeting the transient and diverse requirements for various colleges within the University of Hartford System and elsewhere.

All enrolled Hillyer students are required to take a two-semester course in "academic strategies" with a specific focus on time management, research skills, notetaking, and writing improvement. This course provides a base of preparation for all students, regardless of previous schooling and academic level, as well as necessary knowledge and training applicable for the duration of their years in higher education. As part of their graduation requirements, students also are required to take both math and English courses. Those students demonstrating a need for extra assistance in math preparation, have two options: a non-credit pre-college level math course taught by Hillyer faculty, or an extended version of the University of Hartford Introductory Mathematics Course, which allows students to take additional time in completing a required, credit-bearing math course. Both options address the developmental education needs of Hillyer students while maintaining the college's mission of high standards, exemplary preparation, small class sizes, and close connections between students and faculty. Furthermore, Hillyer is in the beginning stages of creating a program to address the needs of accelerated students, adding a whole new dimension to the meaning of "developmental education" as they seek to nurture the intellectual curiosity of top students while maintaining the goal of preparing all students for a four-year degree.

The relationship between Hillyer College and the University of Hartford represents a unique dynamic in developmental education. Hillyer College illustrates the impact that this joint effort can have for student success and entry into four-year degree programs. As a separate entity, Hillyer has developed a curriculum that adequately prepares students for transfer into a four-year institution, and is particularly advantageous due to its proximity and access to an on-campus, baccalaureate institution.

Sources: Responses from Christine Thatcher, Assistant Dean of Student Services, Hillyer College

Vignettes of Selected Public Institutions in New England

University of Maine Augusta

Location: Augusta, Maine
Established: 1965
Highest Degree Offered: Bachelor's Degree
Enrollment: Approximately 5,600 students

The University of Maine Augusta (UMA) is one of the seven institutions within the state university system and is promoted as the non-traditional state university in the Maine system. The institution is a commuter college with no residence halls. UMA has a clear focus on teaching and learning, a history of providing access to higher education, and places special emphasis on distance learning, adult education, and workforce training. As noted in the UMA Strategic Plan, the overall goal of the institution is "to be an institution with the reputation for offering solid, high-quality educational programs and student services which are timely, accessible, and user-friendly." Its student body is older than the traditional-aged college student, working, and attending school part-time.

The University offers 23 baccalaureate degree programs, majors, and concentrations as well as 25 associate degrees and 12 occupationally-oriented professional certificate programs. UMA has three colleges: the College of Arts and Humanities, the College of Mathematics and Professional Studies, and the College of Natural and Social Sciences. The programs are offered at three campus sites (Augusta, Bangor, and Lewiston-Auburn), and statewide to students taking traditional academic courses via interactive telecourse instruction or system, which services approximately 100 locations.

UMA administers Computerized Placement Tests in reading comprehension, sentence skills, arithmetic skills, elementary algebra and college-level mathematics to all entering students. The placement-testing program is designed to identify students needing preparatory course work in one or more of these skills. With appropriate SAT scores, previous college course work, or other testing criteria, students may be waived from placement testing. Non-degree students wishing to register for courses may also be required to take placement tests to determine the most suitable courses for them. A statewide matrix for placement levels is utilized but varies by campus. Faculty members from the English department are involved in the review of the essay portion of the placement exam. Basic skills courses do not carry degree program credit, but financial aid can pay for these courses. At the Augusta campus, in 2001-02, 54 percent of students were recommended to take writing; 30 percent in reading; and 80 percent in math.

One program that provides direct services to students is the "Cornerstone" program. This program was established to help selected students achieve their educational goals. The "Cornerstone" program is a TRIO-funded effort that offers comprehensive services to support academic, personal, and career development. To be eligible for services a student must: 1) be enrolled in a UMA degree program; 2) have academic need (need developmental course work or help transitioning to college-level work); 3) meet one or more of the following criteria: be of the first generation in the family to attend college; meet federal low-income guidelines; or have a disability. Support services provided include academic survival skills, services for students with disabilities, counseling, tutoring, workshops, and mentoring.

Sources: Participation in two focus group sessions by English Professor Carol Kontos, submission of survey by Dean of Students Kathleen Dexter, and UMA web site, www.uma.maine.edu.

Keene State College

Location: Keene, New Hampshire
Established: 1909
Highest Degree Offered: Master's Degree
Enrollment: 4,600 full- and part-time undergraduates and graduates

Keene State College is located in the southwest corner of New Hampshire in a small town with a population of 23,000 residents. Though the college offers a Master's degree in Education, Keene State primarily serves undergraduate students and focuses its efforts on educating the citizens of New Hampshire. Keene State College offers a liberal arts education through degree programs in the arts, humanities, and sciences, as well as professional programs based in the liberal arts that are designed to prepare students for specific careers. The college promotes strong relationships between students, faculty, and staff, and continues to emphasize creative and critical thinking and scholarship and research.
In order to meet the academic support needs of its student and faculty body, Keene State College established the Elliot Center to provide a centralized location for students, faculty, and staff. The Elliot Center houses Academic and Career Advising, Adult Learner Services, Office of Disability Services, the Registrar's Office, and the "Aspire" program.

The "Aspire Program"—one of two federally funded TRIO programs at Keene State College—provides academic support services to students by working closely with Academic and Career Advising. Through the "Aspire Program," the college assists students in developing academic skills and support strategies and empowers them to be advocates. These goals are accomplished through the services of the "Aspire Program," including: individualized peer tutoring; study-skills workshops; study-skills handouts; skill building; academic advising; financial-aid advising; one-on-one educational counseling and the two components—Supplemental Instruction and the "Link Program"—that are described in more detail below.

The Supplemental Instruction aspect of "Aspire" is designed to improve learning and to provide academic support for students enrolled in challenging courses. This instruction is peer-facilitated by a trained Supplemental Instruction (SI) student leader who attends all classes and models learning practices within the classroom for an entire semester. The SI leader also conducts weekly group study sessions for students wishing to improve their understanding of course material.

The "Link" program is an introductory college program designed to strengthen academic competencies, study strategies, and confidence. As part of the "Aspire" program, the "Link" program works on developing college-level study skills in students. The "Link" program is offered only in the summer; students enroll in two three credit courses—one in essay writing, one in computer information processes, and one in an introduction to college.

Sources: Assistance from Anne Miller, Keene State College, and Keene State College website: www.keene.edu.

Vignettes of Selected Public Institutions in New England

Community College of Rhode Island

Location: Campuses in Warwick, Providence and Lincoln, Rhode Island
Established: 1964
Highest Degree Offered: Associate's Degree
Enrollment: 15,583

Although the state of Rhode Island has no written policy regarding developmental education, the state's Board of Governors of Higher Education strongly endorses developmental education programs and continues to support the community colleges' efforts to increase the effectiveness of their developmental education programs. The state of Rhode Island views developmental education as a necessary component to graduating a well-trained and well-educated workforce, thereby contributing to the economic health of the state. In fact, the state's Economic Development Council identifies emerging industries with a need for skilled and trained individuals (i.e., biotechnology), and works alongside community colleges in developing educational programs that best meet the community's evolving demand. In response to state and student needs, the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) remains accountable to its students' success by guaranteeing that students can retake courses at no cost if they are not prepared for a job after graduation or for coursework at the four-year institution to which they have transferred.

CCRI has campuses located in Lincoln, Providence, and Warwick, as well as satellite sites throughout the state. These campuses and sites offer developmental courses in mathematics, reading, and composition, which address the basic needs of students before they enter higher-level coursework. The administration at CCRI has recently begun to push for higher standards and tougher prerequisite requirements, thus creating an even greater demand for developmental education to meet the increasing needs of students. For example, in one Arithmetic and Elementary Algebra lecture class, enrollment for the fall 2002 semester is nearly full, while many of the higher-level courses are experiencing low enrollment. Placement in classes for degree-seeking CCRI students is done through the COMPASS test in mathematics, reading, and composition. Most of the developmental education courses are taught in lecture or lab format, with a focus on personal attention, achievement, and meeting prerequisite standards. In the case of the math department, faculty members volunteer to teach developmental courses at CCRI. However if enrollment in higher-level classes is superceded by enrollment in developmental courses, faculty might be required to teach these lower-level courses.

Due to the rigorous standards that students must not only meet for a changing workforce, but also for admission to four-year state colleges and universities, CCRI, the University of Rhode Island, and Rhode Island College hold regular meetings sponsored by the Board of Governors to discuss curriculum alignment, transfer requirements and agreements, and national standards. The articulation agreements between CCRI and these two schools make these meetings imperative for the success of community college students in the four-year sector, as well as for the faculty and administration of the schools.
Overall, Rhode Island invests in developmental education by its understanding of how educating all students, regardless of academic level, has direct ties to strengthening the economic and labor needs of the state. The innovative practice of constructively aligning state economic needs with developmental education design and implementation has made CCRI's approach to remediation successful for the state and its student population.

Sources: Developmental Education Questionnaire: Responses by Joe Allen, Mathematics Department.

Vignettes of Selected Public Institutions in New England

Vermont Technical College

Location: Randolph Center, Vermont
Established: 1957
Highest Degree Offered: Bachelor of Science
Enrollment: 1,250 *(750 campus based)*

In the 1970s, the Vermont State Colleges (VSC) developed an Academic Skills policy that required remedial coursework to be offered at the institutional level, and also intended that all institutions would assess students using the same instruments. Despite the VSC's policy, institutions developed exceptions to the mandate and consequently tailored the delivery of remedial education to the needs of their campuses and students. The VSC, realizing that more flexibility was needed to carry out the intentions of the original policy, revised its academic skills policy in 1999. The new policy afforded schools greater flexibility with SAT scores, as well as the opportunity to determine developmental policy and practice according to individual need.

Vermont Technical College (VTC) is primarily a two-year institution that focuses on a wide range of technical programs, offering three associate's degrees (applied science, science, and engineering), as well as one bachelor's degree in the area of Science. In order to address the state's revised policy, VTC essentially eliminated developmental courses throughout its campus, except in three instances, one of the most prominent being the "Three Year Option" (3YO), an innovative program for underprepared students. The "Three Year Option" is a three-year associate's degree program designed for students who need additional skills in math, science, and English. Instead of requiring non-credit courses before entry into the credit sequence for a major, the "Three Year Option" allows students to spread their coursework over three years instead of the usual two. For example, the two-course sequence of technical math followed by calculus is stretched into four courses over two years. This approach allows for increased focus on developing reading, math, and English skills while simultaneously allowing students to take courses necessary for their major. It also permits mastery learning, lighter credit loads, a focus on study skills and strategies, and increased faculty contact. The second exception to VTC's developmental education policy is the offering of one non-credit course—a low-level writing course. Lastly, borderline students may enroll in VTC's four-week summer bridge program that allows students an opportunity to prepare for the normal two-year curriculum.

At VTC, applicants are admitted to the "Three Year Option" in three ways. First, the Admissions Committee may decide that an applicant needs additional time or academic support to complete a degree, and thus, if the student elects to attend VTC, he or she is automatically enrolled in 3YO. The second vehicle for entrance into the program is test scores; all incoming freshman at VTC are required to take exams in reading and math and to write a 300-word essay upon enrollment. The College's Placement Committee then determines which students might benefit from the 3YO program. Third, students who are "regular admits" may self-select the program if they would like to pursue a degree at a more moderate pace. "Three Year Option" students must live on campus in order to be eligible for the program, thus reducing the eligible pool of students to approximately two-thirds of the entering freshman class.

All 3YO courses are taught by VTC faculty and feature a low faculty-student ratio. Despite an extra year to complete their degrees, 91 percent of 3YO students surveyed said that the "Three Year Option" was the right placement for them and are "happy with their experience in the program."

Sources: Remedial Education Questionnaire: Responses by Charles Castelli, VTC's Advising Manual and The Admission Decision

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